

Making material memories: Kinmen's bridging objects and fractured places between China and Taiwan

J.J. Zhang

The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Mike Crang

Durham University, UK

Abstract

The post-war material culture of Kinmen, a former military outpost in Taiwan, reveals a biography moving from conflict to hope for rapprochement, from matériel to militaria to souvenir. By experimenting with the concept of sensuous materialism, this paper looks at touristic things from and of the battlefield past and explores how, through their materialities, things interact with people's senses and shape their understandings of cross-strait relations. Far from being inert, these things are full of life and energy in their ability to animate the object-human relationship. Social memories are enacted through specific material affordances with the senses. Those memories are sensuous, emotional and affective as well as political and historic. Examining the making, staging and consumption of touristic things and how their commemorative materialities interact with and shape people's consciousness of past histories, present happenings and future dreams helps us gain a more nuanced understanding of the China-Taiwan rapprochement process.

Keywords

Sensuous materialism, rapprochement tourism, matériel culture, social memory, affective communication, Taiwan, China

Introduction

This paper looks at the transformations and afterlives of defunct military stuff¹ as they embody a ruptured past. By situating in the wider context of 'difficult heritage',² these artefacts form manifestations of a post-conflict society by materialising the recent past.³ The paper follows the matériel culture of conflict⁴ through attempts to tame its violent associations to trace its continued unruliness. In particular, it looks at the affordances of different materials for different forms and different degrees of malleability of memory. It does this through the case of a former military outpost – Kinmen Island (between China and Taiwan) – which only recently found itself at the centre (both metaphorically and literally) of what we might call 'rapprochement tourism' where travel between former enemies is supposed to lead to increased international harmony. More specifically, we shall examine steel knives made from artillery shell cases, and a music festival staged in a defunct military tunnel carved out of solid rock. As such, the aim is to 'place matter in question'⁵ as vehicle for memory. This paper forms part of a larger project on the cultural-geo-politics of cross-strait tourism, which is based on ethnographic field research undertaken in Kinmen in 2006, 2008, 2010 and 2011. Materials for this piece were drawn from in-depth interviews with a Kinmen Knife blacksmith and the artistic director of the Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival, participant observation at attractions and shops, and semi-structured interviews with both Chinese and Taiwanese tourists.

Politically belonging to Taiwan, Kinmen forms an illuminating case study of contested memories and fractured places, being located 350km southwest of Taipei, but a mere 10km from the city of Xiamen in the People's Republic of China (Figure 1). The island became a

military stronghold of the Kuomintang's (KMT) Nationalist Army after its forces retreated from mainland China during the Civil War with the Chinese Communist Party's People's Liberation Army (PLA) in 1949. It was the site of ferocious battles to stop the PLA from taking Taiwan and thus a frontline in the global Cold War. With the end of the Cold War, the democratisation of Taiwan and the opening of China, Kinmen has experienced gradual demilitarisation. Martial law on the island was lifted in 1992 and direct travel between mainland China and Kinmen re-opened upon the establishment of the 'Mini Three Links' in 2001.⁶ Owing to its strategic location, Kinmen once again finds itself at the centre of cross-strait relations, but this time as the staging post either for Taiwanese businessmen tapping into the Chinese market, or for Chinese tourists seeking cheaper flights to Taiwan, as part of rapprochement tourism.

FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

Remnants of conflict and defunct military infrastructures are now preserved and re-used for a thriving battlefield tourism industry that has created many innovative products from the Kinmen Knives studied here to battlefield-themed food and beverages.⁷ Things of all different substances and sizes have been conscripted for and now enable battlefield heritage tourism. Importantly, the demands of rapprochement tourism entangle touristic consumption and commerce with the realm of social memory. Souvenirs and mementoes have been seen as, what Hetherington⁸ called 'praesentia', where the persistence of objects, even in destruction, is part of 'the ways in which people manage absence within social relations' creating the presence of the absence or haunting from the past. However, in this paper we seek to restore a livelier dimension to things from and of the past.

Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's⁹ classic text introduced the communicative ability of objects. We deploy their concept of 'psychic transactions' to capture the affective energy of communication between things and humans in heritage tourism. In general, accounts of tourism have tended to be object poor, but here we stress that tourism depends on touristic things as they facilitate interactions between and among local people and tourists. The objects work through a variety of senses beyond just the visual – evoking a sensuous materialism. Every 'memorial entails a visceral and sensuous experience' if it is to succeed in affecting people.¹⁰ For example, Macdonald¹¹ explored the enduring agency of the stones of the Zeppelin Building (at the former Nazi party rally grounds in Nuremberg) to 'speak' to humans. For her the stone whose material affordances had promised enduring meaning for the building offered more ambiguous aesthetic appeals in a state of decay. The cross communication of senses and things is then dependent on their insertion in the flow of history so the sensory landscape bears within it emotional and historical sedimentation.¹² However, we suggest that there is something more in a wider sensoria than that upon which Macdonald focuses. For one, touching materials, even those as apparently inert as stone, forms a reversible relationship between things and humans. Things are not merely objects on which meaning and action are inscribed by humans. Taking his lead from Merleau-Ponty, Tilley¹³ describes the materiality of stone thus:

In the process of touching an object ... [a] reversibility of sensation/perception can be posited to be at work. I touch the stone and the stone touches me... Touching the stone is possible because both my body and the stone are part of the same world. There is in this sense a relation of identity and continuity between the two.

The sense of touch from stone is distinct and we shall see multiple – as it touches us directly or through acoustics and containing felt space. Objects are seen here as being able to *do*

something, 'to perform actions, produce effects, and alter situations'.¹⁴ This follows

Bennett's¹⁵ notion of 'vital materialism':

By 'vitality' I mean the capacity of things – edibles, commodities, storms, metals – not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.

In the context of Kinmen, objects associated with its battlefield heritage are animated with spirits of the past, and are constantly in conversations with their makers, local people and tourists, creating affective experiences and structuring the consciousness of other actors and actants of the battlefield tourism landscape. In the next section, we revisit the debate surrounding post-war commemorative materialities in light of such a sensuous materialism to ask its implications for a 'sensorial anthropology'¹⁶ and sensuous scholarship.¹⁷

Materialising memories: 'Trench Art' and commemoration in post-war landscapes

War objects may be small, e.g. a bullet; intermediate, e.g. a tank; or large, e.g. a whole battlefield landscape. All share the defining characteristic of being the product of human action rather than natural processes. Thus, the Western Front of the First World War is as much an artefact as a portable war souvenir, a Second World War V2 rocket, the symbolic terrain of war memorials, or the 'Cross' formed by remaining structural elements in the ruins of the World Trade Centre.¹⁸

Literature on war commemoration has often focused on official monuments.¹⁹ More lately accounts have broadened to include battlefield relics and memorabilia, which can circulate beyond the site of conflict where their making/buying/giving and their travels foster an instability in values and meanings through time and space. Themes surrounding war commemoration have been extensively discussed in works related to major global conflict.²⁰ Less has been said with regards to memorialising the Cold War though some studies have

highlighted the awkward persistence of structures designed for indestructibility.²¹ The civil war between China and Taiwan has scarcely been examined and offers a 'hot' Cold War conflict.

We take inspiration from Nicholas Saunders' analysis of Trench Art²² that re-evaluates 'the role of material culture as multi-vocal representational embodiments of war'.²³ He defines Trench Art as 'any item made by soldiers, prisoners of war, and civilians, from war matériel directly, or any other material, as long as it and they are associated temporally and/or spatially with armed conflict or its consequences'.²⁴ Although Saunders²⁵ thus shows the resignification of the desiderata of war, objects function as largely passive surfaces on which meaning is inscribed. This paper follows his broader definition of matériel culture by examining how things from and of a past generation continue to act in contemporary consumption practices, and how, instead of being 'cast in stone', meanings of such artefacts are always in a state of becoming rather than being. In developing this angle we distinguish between the physicality and materiality of an object, that are all too often elided in calls to 'rematerialise' research in cultural geography.²⁶ What is created are 'configurations of meanings and substances, which enter with human lives into a field of co-emerging interactions.'²⁷ We therefore argue that materiality is a medium through which interactions between people and things take place, and it is taken to refer to the tangibility and composition of things that evokes the various senses of vision, hearing, smell, taste and touch. As such, this paper contends that the materialities of the battlefield past are not dead and cold, but are in fact lively and restless in their current interaction with humans. In other words, instead of presuming that things are vehicles for meanings inscribed onto them, it sees the materiality of things as able to foster meanings that exceed those

inscriptions. In this sense Massumi argues materials are 'self-disclosing' rather than a passive object awaiting discovery. For him, both material and social elements allow an unpredictable surplus and the emergence of novelty.²⁸

The relationship of material endurance and memory is therefore not simple. At one level most monuments are materially designed to perdure, and carrying memories through time is often associated with object endurance.²⁹ Conversely, the gradual or sudden loss and destruction of an object can be what creates the affective charge.³⁰ Or indeed it can be the material melding of elements, such as parts of different ships in Stanley Bleifeld's statue *The Lone Sailor*³¹ or the soils of different provinces in Hans Haacke's Bundestag work.³² Once moved beyond their original setting, physically, temporally or socially, the constellation of meanings that artefacts conjure also change. For instance, Harrison³³ explores the changing meanings to war veterans of mementos taken from the enemy dead as war trophies, and traces the later desire to return such artefacts to the original owners' surviving kin as a form of reconciliation laying memories to rest. Alternatively, the hot and lustrous qualities of fresh shrapnel was what gave valency to anti-aircraft shrapnel collected by British children in the second world war; as the material cooled so too its value drained away.³⁴ Such labile commemorative materialities and their associations with memory (un)making are what this paper attempts to explicate.

Saunders³⁵ offers a more prescriptive temporal trajectory based on First World War Trench Art. His discussion provides a narrative of the loss of authenticity and the original feelings of Trench Art as they are commodified through tourism:

Burgeoning number of battlefield visitors saw an increase in the popularity of all kinds of Great War memorabilia and the ever popular decorated shell cases became a mainstay of the militaria trade. Most have had their original meanings displaced by a market whose fluctuating prices reflect the classificatory confusion which surrounds them. Regarded variously as antiques, militaria, souvenirs, bric-a-brac and curios, the qualities of completeness, distinctiveness and shiny appearance have replaced earlier emotional values.³⁶

The general move from folk production to commerce is important to note. However, by privileging and authenticating Trench Art produced by people who, and artefacts which, are closer to the conflict in a temporal sense, he downplays the creativity of later producers and affective power of later products. As this paper will show, post-war commemorative materialities of the Kinmen Knife and the Tunnel Music Festival can be equally powerful in their ability to interact with people, and to awake their consciousness about Kinmen's turbulent past and contemporary cross-strait ties. Indeed, 'recognizing the multiple temporalities of the material culture of war and the contingent relation of military material culture to conflict is an important step for the development of the field'.³⁷

The focus on materiality means attending not just to objects but to situated encounters. This moves us from a predominantly visual analysis to attend to all the senses through which people interact with artefacts.³⁸ Indeed, it is the tactility and portability of Trench Art that creates its intimate and affective appeal:

Paintings and memorials represented war from a distance, spatially and temporally. They connected through impressions, possessing little or no sensuous or tactile immediacy. By contrast, metal Trench Art was made from the waste of war, its varied forms incorporating the agents of death and mutilation directly. Anonymously responsible for untold suffering and bereavement, expended shells, bullets and shrapnel were worked into a variety of forms, engaging visual, olfactory, tactile, and sometimes auditory senses, as well as memory.³⁹

The result might be considered as ‘proximal nonrepresentational forms of knowledge’⁴⁰ that are performative and in process, rather than visual or distal forms of knowledge of separated objects that reconfirm our self/other boundaries. Such a sensuous materialism and its affective communication⁴¹ overflows to current times and spaces. Saunders notes that it is the physicality and nature of metal Trench Art that makes it ‘a unique mediator between men and women, soldier and civilian, individual and industrialized society, the nations which fought the war, and, perhaps most of all, between the living and the dead’.⁴² But how then do different materialities of artefacts and encounters with them mediate or even animate such relationships? Artefacts are encountered in and through material spaces and contexts of local epistemologies and sensory regimes.⁴³ As such, ‘sensuous materialism’ attempts to see the different senses as channels through which the materiality of an object interacts with people and creates effects. The ensuing sections will bring on the ‘Trench Art’ in question, namely the Kinmen Knife and the Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival, and discuss the commemorative materialities each possesses in affecting visitors sensuously.

Making objects of memory: from artillery shells to household knives

The August 23rd Artillery Bombardment marked the beginning of the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. The artillery battle lasted for 44 days during which an estimated total of 475,000 artillery shells fell on Kinmen and its surrounding islets. Intermittent shelling continued for the next ten years. This bombardment is recycled and its memory perpetuated through the Kinmen Knife (Figure 2).

FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

Figure 2 shows the Kinmen Knife in its various guises, ranging from Chinese cleavers to multi-purpose and sashimi knives. Manufactured using artillery shell cases and fragments (Figure 3) from the bombardment, the Kinmen Knife is one of the most sought after souvenirs by visitors to Kinmen. It is the icon of the island, and is often featured in media reports and documentaries by the likes of CNN, NHK from Japan, and international magazines, to the extent that Wu Tseng-Dong, Director of Chin Ho Li (one of today's leading knife manufacturers) argued, 'Today, when people think of Kinmen, they will think of the Kinmen Knife.' Recalling its origins he recounted:

I survived the war years as a child. We were so helpless when the artillery shells came. But when we got used to the bombing, we could estimate where the shells landed and decide whether to take cover in the tunnel or not. When things got quiet, some of us would go in search for the shell fragments to be used as raw materials for our knives. ...The kitchen knife is used in every household... both in China and Taiwan. I want to remind people of the great sufferings caused by the war. At the same time, this common household item would also remind the users of the kinship and culture that both sides share. We are ultimately one family.

FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE

Recycling the artillery shell cases and fragments is an attempt to reclaim a sense of control over a weapon of mass destruction that ruptured the lives of so many. Concurrently, this can also be seen as a way to seek closure to the persisting unrest and conflict between the two sides. Simultaneously, there is a yearning for peaceful reconciliation to be reflected in and enabled by manufacturing something from the debris of war. The knife is placed in the

hearth of a family that was literally as well as figuratively divided by the conflict. Indeed, 'the meanings people give to things are part and parcel of the same meanings that they give to their lives'.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, in his domestication of a weapon into an everyday household item, Wu is not quite ready to completely silence its materiality. A half-knife half-artillery shell stood stoutly on a display cabinet in his shop (Figure 4). It seems to suggest the reincarnation of the dead and corroded shell case into a knife of hope that breathes new life into cross-strait ties. The Kinmen Knife, considering the very material that it is made from, is inextricably linked to the 'sufferings caused by the war'. Yet, such commemorative materiality seeks not to remember, but to forget. Unlike the various official war memorials constructed by the Ministry of Defence to convey nationalist ideologies,⁴⁵ the artillery shell case, stripped of its ability to cause destruction, seeks to sublate past atrocities and hostilities in its reincarnation as an everyday household item. The knife takes on a new role, however, to 'remind the users of the kinship and culture that both sides share'.

FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

During the martial law years up till 1992, Wu's main customers were the garrison. Soldiers serving on the island would buy a knife or two to take back to Taiwan when they completed their tour of duty. Subsequently, through word of mouth, the popularity of the Kinmen Knife grew. With the gradual de-militarisation of Kinmen, the main clientele shifted to being tourists from both mainland Taiwan and China. Although the Kinmen Knife remains the same, as a souvenir it has been invested with different meanings by its buyers. Following Susan Stewart, souvenirs work to remember 'events whose materiality has escaped us'.⁴⁶ For the returning soldier, the Kinmen Knife when brought home, served as both a closure

and continuity of his military experience. It was a piece of the war, a fragment from a weapon of mass destruction that might have killed him. Possessing or giving the Kinmen Knife, thus, was an extension of himself;⁴⁷ it was a performance of victory over death. For Taiwanese tourists, the island of Kinmen was a mystery throughout the martial law years – long heard of but never visited. It was only with the end of martial law on the island that the first tours began. To tourists, the Knife serves as a memorial token ‘of a spatially and temporally distanced landscape’.⁴⁸ For mainland Chinese visitors, they were curious about the island’s ability to withstand the artillery bombardment during the war years. It was almost a mystery that the PLA failed to capture this small isolated island. One Chinese tourist at the Chin Ho Li store shared,

I’ve heard of the Kinmen Knife even before I reached Kinmen. It’s so popular in Xiamen. It is so surreal to touch these knives and to know that they are actually made from artillery shells that were fired from our side. But it’s not sensitive now... we are already at peace and we are buying the knife as a souvenir.

The purchasing of a knife, made from artillery shells fired from Mainland China authenticates the Chinese tourists’ battlefield borderland/frontier experience, reinstantiates the history and yet transcends it. Referring to his Chinese customers, Wu commented:

The artillery shell fragment represents war and cruelty, but now we use it to make something that is heart-warming... a household item. It represents a transition from war to peace. You see, it was originally a war item. Now there are Chinese tourists. They come and would find this knife interesting... it can be a souvenir or used at home. The knife is made from artillery shells fired by them. And now, in times of peace, they are bringing these back.

The ‘returning’ of the artillery shells reflects a conversation that is ongoing amongst the Knife, its maker and its users. The material and texture of the Knife speaks of its life story – a biography that very much centres on the intractable conflict across the strait. The

materiality of the Knife thus acts as a platform for him to remind the Chinese tourists of the atrocities caused by war. The knife is a 'precipitate of re-memory'⁴⁹ as recollections of the conflict as experienced elsewhere, not just the bombardment of the island, are stimulated through the sight, touch and density of everyday encounters. As such objects are not just symbols of a social group 'but may themselves be constitutive of a certain social relation'.⁵⁰

So far we have focused on the interactions between humans and objects. The Kinmen Knife, its maker and users are involved in what Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton⁵¹ call 'psychic activities or transactions'. According to them, 'Objects are not static entities whose meaning is projected on to them from cognitive functions of the brain or from abstract conceptual systems of culture' but are 'objectified forms of psychic energy'..⁵² The idea of 'psychic energy' within the transactions between persons and things recognises the liveliness of things. The question is, if the Kinmen Knife is alive and energetic, does its conversation with the maker remain the same ever since its reincarnation? Wu reflected how its significance had changed for him:

In the past, we did not think too much about the symbolism of the knife. During the war years, people went around to collect shell fragments to sell for money. It was a matter of surviving and earning some cash. We bought the fragments and turned them into knives and sold them. It was for the money too. We basically needed to make a living during those difficult times... But in recent years, cross-strait relations have become more amicable. And there has been a more economic focus to cross-strait ties over the past ten years. So gradually, we started to associate our knife with the promotion of peace across the strait.

Here then the symbolic charge of the knife increases rather than diminishes over time. This is not personally aestheticised trench art becoming monetised, but a scrap commodity becoming aestheticised. The economic value of shell fragments has always been prioritised,

and the psychic transactions between the Kinmen Knife and its maker have changed over time with the evolving geopolitical situation. The language has metamorphosed from one of 'survival' and 'making a living', to one of 'promoting peaceful cross-strait ties'. Contrasting with Saunders'⁵³ attempt to classify memorial tokens into three manufacturing periods, each dominated by a certain group of makers and genre of artefact, the materiality of the Kinmen Knife overflows temporal and spatial boundaries. Through engaging its maker and users in different psychic interactions, the Knife effectively adapts to the unstable cultural-geopolitical climate, renews its identity, embodies changing ideologies, and shapes the identities of its users so as to survive through the years and even 'travel' beyond the border. As such, it is important to appreciate the trajectories of things, and to interrogate and capture materiality in action, and how meanings are always in a state/flux of emergence.

The recycling of the shell cases and fragments into household knives materialises war time memories. Waste produced by such a lethal entity that cost the lives of so many becomes reincarnated into an ambassador of goodwill between China and Taiwan. Handling and touching the Kinmen Knife renders present both the tumultuous past and a relatively cordial present across the Taiwan Strait. As such the knives have a biography of changing values and attitudes attached to them by different people over time⁵⁴ and, we would add, space. Yet, such a biography is a messy one as the Kinmen Knife fuses sentiments of war and peace, and it juxtaposes presence and absence at once. Perhaps the half-knife, half-artillery shell that resides in Wu's shop says it best: there is no clear demarcation of where the shell ends and where the knife starts. The Kinmen Knife is as much possessed by the spirits of the past as it is an embodiment of a potentially promising peaceful future.

Memory soundscapes: The Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival

After the artillery bombardment in 1958, the military constructed underground tunnels so as to preserve their combat capability. Conceived in 1961 and completed in 1966, the Zhaishan Tunnel and its water passage (Figure 5) leads directly from the inner land to the ocean. Its 'A-shaped' waterway is 357m long, 11.5m wide and 8m high, and provided shelter for some 42 small naval vessels. The tunnel also has a wharf that served as a base for shipment of military supply. Abandoned underground structures have an especial allure of uncovering the hidden,⁵⁵ and defunct military structures also have been noted to be marked by soundscapes that either amplify the dislocation from or make present the past deadly purposes of the sites.⁵⁶ After the martial law period and the gradual demilitarisation of the island, the tunnel gained an ideological function of relaying nationalist ideologies to the younger generations of Taiwanese as it was transformed into a site for national education. When asked about their recollections of Kinmen's war-related landscape, locals will often reminisce about school trips to the various military installations and museums, especially during National Day celebrations. The hegemonic narrative surrounding Zhaishan Tunnel emphasises the valour of the nationalist soldiers and their determination to defend Kinmen against the communists at all costs.⁵⁷

FIGURE 5 ABOUT HERE

This public discourse is still very much alive in present day where ‘underground Kinmen’, produced by this ‘tunnelisation’ has been developed into a valuable tourism resource. In the tunnel, tourists get to see the living quarters of soldiers and the carved surfaces of granite gneiss. Tour guides ritualistically emphasise the ‘almost impossible task of excavating through the solid granite’ and the ‘sufferings that soldiers experienced during the round-the-clock construction.’ Tourists are encouraged to ‘touch the granite structure, breathe in the dense air and imagine how life was like for the soldiers during the war.’ One local official explained:

We want to let the tourists understand better the hardship suffered by our soldiers, and for the young Taiwanese to realise how much their forefathers had gone through. Without Kinmen, there is no Taiwan. So, by converting it [the tunnel] to a tourist site, they can see it for themselves...more effective than textbook [knowledge].

The presentation to tourists aims to ‘raise their emotional quotient by [allowing them to] empathis[e] with the events’⁵⁸ giving the infrastructure emotional resonance. Indeed, ‘much of the symbolic importance of these places stems from their emotional associations, the feelings they inspire of awe, dread, worry, [or] loss’.⁵⁹

In recent years, due to the improvement of cross-strait ties, the tunnel finds itself hosting the Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival, aiming to foster peaceful reconciliation between China and Taiwan. Conceived by Taiwanese cellist Chang Cheng-Jieh and organised by the Kinmen National Park, the Music Festival has been an instant hit since its inception in 2009 to coincide with the 60th Anniversary of the Kuningtou Battle.⁶⁰ The music performance features renowned Taiwanese musicians playing on a floating platform in the water passage

in the tunnel (Figure 6). Audiences are stood along the originally elevated granite corridor, which overlooks the passage. Chang suggested music has instilled life into Zhaishan Tunnel:

I have always thought if it is merely Zhaishan Tunnel, it is only something that is left behind by the war...by history. The feeling is unique when you enter, but it does not possess a new life. But with music inside, when the music flows and notes start to dance... Music, I think is an excellent language. ... Today, when you enter the Tunnel and the guide talks about what happened 50 or 60 years ago, how this was built because of the war...etc... This sounds very direct, very hard... But if today you enter the Tunnel, and the music comes on... The musical notes could almost bring you to a kind of... to another world. But that world differs from each and every person. Moreover, I think that music is the best bridge of communication between different generations. It is in fact, a language between our world and the other world... The force to move you is even stronger.

FIGURE 6 ABOUT HERE

Music is not only more powerful than words; it is also full of energy and breathes new life into the tunnel. The tunnel *performs* the music through its materiality or in Gibson's⁶¹ terms *affords* the performances to take place. The materiality of the tunnel provides perfect acoustics. Conversely, the music acts as the tunnel's voice and softens its concreteness while affording the audiences the space for imaginations. One audience member wrote on a feedback form, 'Grateful, thankful, touched' while another expressed, 'Bravo! Really touching, fantastic sound effect!' .⁶² One of the attendees even posted a poem on her/his Facebook page:

For Warriors Who Gave Their Lives

The violin's elegant notes praise your ultimate sacrifice for this land;
The cello's muffled sound conveys our admiration for you;
We no longer hear the roaring engines of fighter planes;
...Nor we see the battling warships;

We no longer feel the rumbling of the cannons
But I hear it. I hear the flute playing, through the holes left behind by gunpowder blasts;
And I see it. The ensemble of violin and cello interweaves and mirrors
the battle scenes you were in;
And As I close my eyes, I feel the comfort you felt when you closed yours then...⁶³

The combination of unyielding materials and music enhance the affective potency of the site.⁶⁴ However, this is not to say that the audiences are directed to a particular 'ending', but, as what Chang suggested the 'other world' to which the music brings is different for everyone. This is what Feld⁶⁵ calls an 'acoustemology' of the local combinations of acoustics, knowledge and imagination. The following paragraph from Chris Tilley⁶⁶ beautifully captures the essence of the reciprocity of place and performance:

Merleau-Ponty, in his famous essay 'Eye and Mind', writes of a reversal of roles between the painter and the painted. He cites the painter as saying: 'In a forest, I have felt many times over that it was not I who looked at the forest. Some days I felt that the trees were looking at me' (Merleau-Ponty, 1964: 167). There comes a point, Merleau-Ponty comments, in which who sees and what is being seen, who paints and what is being painted, is thoroughly ambiguous. And this is because painting is not just an act of pure vision; it establishes bodily contact between the painter, who paints with his or her body, and the painted. Painting is a bodily process linking the two. The painter sees the trees and the trees see the painter, not because the trees have eyes, but because the trees affect, move the painter, become part of the painting that would be impossible without their presence. In this sense the trees have agency and are not merely passive objects.

Similarly, in the case of the Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival, the rock plays the music as well. The tunnel acts as a 'sensorium'⁶⁷ where the various actors and actants come together. The music is able to create a sensorial experience to connect the bodies of the musicians and spectators with that of the aural of the tunnel. Unlike conventional war memorials where the sense of sight takes precedence, the musical affects in the tunnel offer a proximal alternative to the visualisation of past woes and present hopes. Indeed, the music travels in

and between different 'worlds', be it now and then, here and there, us and them, dead and alive. This creates an example of what, after LaBelle, we might call an 'acoustic politics of space' where sound becomes a method to engage in, and elaborate upon, contemporary globalized political landscapes.⁶⁸

It is evident that the materiality of the Zhaishan Tunnel is active in (re)creating social relations and its affordances offer shifting possibilities. Stone has long been associated with conveying within its materiality the thickness of time,⁶⁹ however here the qualities of the rock are more fluid. Drawing on Macdonald's point about 'sacred landscapes' being 'profaned' by ordinary uses and thus 'depleted of their agency to attract and to shape identities in the ways that their original creators would have wished',⁷⁰ the nationalist ideologies attributed to the Zhaishan Tunnel end up playing second fiddle to its role in promoting cross-strait relations. Nevertheless, such 'profanation' brings with it possibilities in that it allows people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait to 'face up to' their past,⁷¹ and through the materiality of the tunnel conjure up new possibilities of cross-strait interaction. As such, music in a battlefield tunnel might not be merely something to remind people of the battlefield past, but also seeks to transcend political boundaries in its attempt to create new collective memories in the name of peace and harmony for participants of different political allegiances. As such, '[m]emory is constantly refigured in practice and performance through what individuals do. As things are done, other "events" are remembered and replaced into the present. Memory is temporalized and can reinvigorate what one is doing "now"; it is also reinvigorated and can be rerouted in the "now", but not in an exact rerun of the past.'⁷² Indeed, it is at the intersections of remembering, forgetting and creating memories that both the music and tunnel live. As much as the tunnel still exudes the

patriotism and fervour of a past era for some, it has also lent its own material conditions to transmitting the music of peace.

In short, this case study can be positioned at the cross-road of 'acoustical and cultural analysis'⁷³ as it 'involves both an account of the physical or material conditions of sound production and the social and historical conditions of its invocation and interpretation.'⁷⁴

Materiality, as Sofaer argues, 'provides the means by which social relations are visualized...

Without material expression social expressions have little substantive reality, as there is nothing through which these relations can be mediated.'⁷⁵ However, the music festival

demonstrates a possibility to go beyond ocular-centric analyses and engage in sensuous

materialism to gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interactions between

objects and people. Music, though intangible, conveys powerful feelings and is actively re-

creating collective memories in the military tunnel. Yet, it does not act alone. It appears as

part of the concrete materiality of the tunnel for it is the acoustics of the gneissian structure

that allows the music to be what it is. If history is set in stone then, that rock is no

'compliant conveyor of factuality' rather it is a 'keen and affective provocation to thought'

where 'stone is fact-laden and emotion-triggering....Stone is not an obstacle to be overcome,

but a thing that makes demands, scripts stories, and does not fully yield to human

enframing.'⁷⁶

Conclusions

This paper has sought to destabilise the boundaries of touristic things that are often

dismissed as inauthentic, kitsch or banal, and landscapes of heritage and memory, often

seen as solemn and sacred. Through ideas of sensuous materialism, the paper attempts to

go beyond ocular-centric analyses and re-orientate studies on post-war material culture to recognise the interactivity of objects and humans through an enriched attention to the sensuality of heritage. By way of conclusion, we make four reflections on the materiality, memory, identity and mobility of things.

First, work on memorialisation has tended to look at the visual representation and iconography of the past. A notable exception is the tactility of the portable objects in Nicholas Saunderson's Trench Art. We have attempted to go beyond ocular-centric accounts by capturing the sensate and sensorial aspects of human-thing interactions. Hetherington's⁷⁷ discussion on touch as a source of knowledge that is 'proximal' rather than 'distal' invites us to think through how different knowledges emerge from other senses. The Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival has suggested that the specific local combinations of sound, materiality of place and imagination can form a particular sensorium,⁷⁸ an arena within which the sensory apparatus of an individual operates in culturally specific ways.

Second, we have suggested that things act as objects of memory through the affects they are capable of transmitting/communicating. Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton's⁷⁹ notion of psychic energies suggests the potential of things such as the Kinmen Knife and the Zhaishan Tunnel to evoke memories of the past, but also break and remake collective memories. The affective communication between people and things is crucial to understanding Kinmen's post-war society and how cross-strait ties might develop.

Thirdly, touristic things are for sure extensions of their makers' identities but they also possess identities and are involved in active conversations with their buyer/owner/giver. As

Tilley⁸⁰ argues, 'Things and places are active agents of identity rather than pale reflections of pre-existing ideas and socio-political relations. Having real material and ideological effects on persons and social relations, things and places can then be regarded as much subjects as objects of identity.' This active dialogue is sustained in places and through the materialities of things and their affordances. What Karen Barad calls 'a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative intra-activity.'⁸¹ Therefore, it is worthwhile to interrogate and capture materiality in action, and appreciate how meanings are always in a state/flux of emergence rather than fixed and inscribed forever by the state or social scientists.

The fourth and final point concerns the attempt to recognise multiple spatialities/temporalities by moving away from notions of authenticity tied to location/origin or producer or time period that works on military/tourist souvenirs currently use. For instance, if we privilege metal Trench Art produced by soldiers and civilians during and in the immediate aftermath of war, we overlook the creativity and vitality of more contemporary producers. More specifically, the artillery shell Kinmen Knife and Zhaishan Tunnel examples show that things from the military past often re-invent their materialities over time enabling new political resonances. Just as the Knife transforms itself from a local survival product to a commercial ambassador of peaceful cross-strait ties, the Tunnel's adamantine materiality ceases to be defensive and instead echoes rhythms of harmony across the Taiwan Strait. Furthermore, things move. The mobility and circulation of material culture has been highlighted. For one, rapprochement tourism between China and Taiwan does not merely consist of travelling bodies; touristic things travel across political boundaries too. Reflecting on the buying of the Kinmen Knife by Chinese tourists, the maker saw it as a way of 'returning' the artillery shells to the place from whence they were fired

not as a counter bombardment, but with the reincarnated shell delivering a message of peace and reconciliation. Metal mutates. And yet, it bears still its prior purpose.

To close, looking at the materialities that go into creating the meanings of rapprochement tourism between China and Taiwan suggests we need to attend more generally to the traffic between memories, meanings and things. Sensuous materialism offers an avenue for us to gain a sense of the past and a 'sense-able' present. With a thriving battlefield tourism food industry that has already seen the likes of the 'Kinmen Battlefield Cocktail series', the 'Bullet Crackers' and the 'Mine Cakes' being produced and receiving rave support from cross-strait tourists,⁸² there is good potential for a sensuous scholarship to be extended to the realm of foodscapes, transient materials and 'ingested' memories. Lastly, whilst it is tempting to cast objects as the props that support and stabilise memory we should note that, 'the relation between remembrance and forgetfulness is not a linear process but a struggle, a tension'.⁸³ One reason for that tension is that the materials are lively, with their own temporalities and potentialities. In choosing the knife and the tunnel we have focused on two materials normally associated with inertness and stability. We have tried to show how the matter here becomes active through their materialization. Therefore our understandings of memorialisation need to endow the material world with a greater measure of agency in the workings of memory.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their useful comments. Different versions of this paper were presented at the 'Hearing Landscape Critically: Sense, Text, Ideology' conference in Oxford University organised by Carina Venter, Michael Uy and Jonathan Hicks, and at the 'Research Seminar Series' in the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. Many thanks to the organisers of these events and the participants who gave helpful suggestions. The usual disclaimers apply.

Notes

- 1 N.J. Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory: 'Trench Art' and the Great War recycled', *Journal of Material Culture*, 5, 2000, pp. 43 – 67.
- 2 S. Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London; New York: Routledge, 2009).
- 3 A. González-Ruibal, 'Time to destroy: An archaeology of supermodernity', *Current Anthropology*, 49(2), 2008, pp. 247-279.
- 4 C.M. Beck, W.G. Johnson and J. Schofield (eds), *Matériel Culture: The Archaeology of Twentieth-century Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2004).
- 5 B. Anderson and D. Tolia-Kelly, 'Matter(s) in social and cultural geography', *Geoforum* 35, 2004, pp. 669-674, p. 673.
- 6 These are trade, postal and transportation links between mainland China and Kinmen on an experimental basis, thus 'mini'. The 'Big Three Links' were officially established in 2008 with the initiation of direct flights, shipping and post between mainland China and Taiwan.
- 7 For a more comprehensive list, see Yang, M.C. and Hsing, W.C. (2001) 'Kinmen: governing the culture industry city in the changing global context', *Cities*, 18(2), pp. 77-85.
- 8 K. Hetherington, 'Spatial textures: place, touch, and praesentia', *Environment and Planning A*, 35, 2003, pp. 1933-1944; K. Hetherington, 'Secondhandedness: consumption, disposal, and absent presence', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 22, 2004, pp. 157-173.
- 9 M. Csikszentmihalyi and E. Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
- 10 Z. Beckstead, G. Twose, E. Levesque-Gottlieb and J. Rizzo, 'Collective remembering through the materiality and organization of war memorials', *Journal of Material Culture*, 16(2), 2011, pp. 193-213, p. 199.
- 11 S. Macdonald, 'Words in stone? Agency and identity in a Nazi Landscape', *Journal of Material Culture*, 11 (1-2), 2006, pp. 105-126.
- 12 C.N. Seremetakis, 'The memory of the senses, part I: Marks of the transitory', in C.N. Seremetakis (ed), *The senses still: Perception and memory as material culture in modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1994), p. 7.
- 13 C. Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone: Explorations in Landscape Phenomenology* (Oxford: Berg, 2004), p. 17.

- 14 J. Bennett, 'The force of things: Steps toward an ecology of matter', *Political Theory*, 32 (3), 2004, pp. 347-372, p. 355.
- 15 J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2010), p. viii.
- 16 D. Howes (ed), *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1991).
- 17 P. Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).
- 18 N.J. Saunders, 'Memory and conflict', in V. Buchli (ed), *The Material Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), pp. 175-206.
- 19 Beckstead et al., 'Collective remembering'.
- 20 See for example, J. Iles, 'Recalling the ghosts of war: Performing tourism on the battlefields of the Western Front', *Text and Performance Quarterly* 26(2), 2006, pp. 162-180; M.S. Morris, 'Gardens "for Ever England": Landscape, identity and the First World War British cemeteries on the Western Front', *Cultural Geographies* 4, 1997, pp. 410-434; G. Moshenska, 'A hard rain: Children's shrapnel collections in the Second World War', *Journal of Material Culture*, 13(1), 2008, pp. 107-125; H. Muzaini, *Tense Past, Present Tensions: Postcolonial Memoryscapes and the Memorialisation of the Second World War in Perak, Malaysia*, (unpublished PhD Thesis, Durham University, UK, 2009).
- 21 Beckstead et al., 'Collective remembering'; L. Bennett, 'Bunkerology - a case study in the theory and practice of urban exploration', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29(3), 2011, pp. 421-434; J. Kippin, *Cold War Pastoral: Greenham Common* (London: Black Dog, 2000); M. van der Hoorn, 'Exorcising remains: Architectural fragments as intermediaries between history and individual experience', *Journal of Material Culture*, 8(2), 2003, pp. 189-213; L. Wilson, 'Notes on a record of fear: On the threshold of the audible', in C. Holtorf and A. Piccini (eds), *Contemporary Archaeologies: Excavating Now* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), pp. 113-128.
- 22 Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory'; N.J. Saunders, *Trench Art: Materialities and Memories of War* (Oxford: Berg, 2003a); N.J. Saunders, 'Crucifix, cavalry and cross: Materiality and spirituality in Great War landscapes', *World Archaeology*, 35(1), 2003b, pp. 7-21.
- 23 Saunders, 'Memory and conflict', pp. 175.
- 24 Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory', pp. 45; Saunders, 'Memory and conflict', pp. 182.
- 25 Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory'.
- 26 For a similar critique, see N. Ramsay, 'Taking-place: Refracted enchantment and the habitual spaces of the tourist souvenir', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 10, 2009, pp. 197-217.
- 27 S. Iovino and S. Oppermann, 'Material ecocriticism: Materiality, agency, and models of narrativity', *Ecozon*, 3(1), 2012, pp. 75-91, p.79.
- 28 B. Massumi, *Parables for the virtual: Movement, affect, sensation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).
- 29 Beckstead et al., 'Collective remembering'
- 30 N. Gregson, M. Crang and H. Watkins, 'Souvenir salvage and the death of great naval ships', *Journal of Material Culture*, 16(3), 2011, pp. 301-324; O. Löfgren, 'Wear and tear', in O. Löfgren and R. Wilk (eds), *Off the Edge: Experiments in Cultural Analysis* (Copenhagen: Museum of Tusculanum Press, 2006), pp. 53-58.
- 31 Gregson et al., 'Souvenir salvage'.

- 32 M. Wagner, 'Hans Haacke's earth samplings for the Bundestag: Materials as signs of political unity', *Journal of Material Culture*, 12(2), 2007, pp. 115-130.
- 33 S. Harrison, 'War mementos and the souls of missing soldiers: returning effects of the battlefield dead', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 14, 2008, pp. 774-790.
- 34 Moshenska, 'A hard rain'.
- 35 Saunders, 'Memory and conflict'.
- 36 Op. cit., p. 36.
- 37 Gregson et al., 'Souvenir salvage', p. 303.
- 38 Howes (ed), *The Varieties of Sensory Experience*.
- 39 Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory', p. 46.
- 40 Hetherington, 'Spatial textures', p. 1938.
- 41 Beckstead et al., 'Collective remembering'.
- 42 Saunders, 'Bodies of metal, shells of memory', p. 46.
- 43 Stoller, *Sensuous Scholarship*.
- 44 Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, p. 218.
- 45 J.J. Zhang, *Tourism-mentality: Power and Politics of Battlefield Tourism in Kinmen, Taiwan* (unpublished M.Soc.Sci. Thesis, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 2009).
- 46 S. Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir and the Collection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 135.
- 47 R.W. Belk, 'Possessions and the extended self', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 1988, pp. 139-168.
- 48 D. Tolia-Kelly, 'Locating processes of identification: Studying the precipitates of re-memory through artefacts in the British Asian home', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 29, 2004, pp. 314-329.
- 49 Tolia-Kelly, 'Locating processes of identification'.
- 50 Miller (1987), cited in H. Geismar, and H.A. Horst, 'Materialising ethnography', *Journal of Material Culture*, 9, 2004, pp. 5-10, p.6.
- 51 Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*
- 52 Op. cit., p. 173.
- 53 N.J. Saunders, 'The ironic "culture of shells" in the Great War and beyond', in J. Schofield, W.G. Johnson, and C. Beck (eds), *Matériel Culture: The Archaeology of 20th Century Conflict* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 22-40.
- 54 I. Kopytoff, 'The cultural biography of things: Commoditization as process', in A. Appadurai (ed) *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 64-91.
- 55 Bennett, 'Bunkerology'.
- 56 Wilson, 'Notes on a record of fear'.
- 57 For more critical analyses of hegemonic narratives related to Kinmen's battlefield landscape, see for example, M. Szonyi, *Cold War Island: Quemoy on the Front Line* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008) and Zhang, 'Tourism-mentality'.
- 58 H. Muzaini, *Localizing Memoryscapes, Building a Nation: Commemorating the Second World War in Singapore* (unpublished M.A. Thesis, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 2004), p.53.
- 59 J. Davidson, L. Bondi and M. Smith (eds), *Emotional Geographies* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), p. 3.

- 60 The Kuningtou Battle in 1949 is the only battle where the communist soldiers landed on Kinmen and engaged in face-to-face combat with the nationalist soldiers. The nationalists eventually won this battle – their first victory in many months of retreat from the mainland. This victory has since been recognised as crucial for preventing a communist take-over.
- 61 Gibson (1979), cited in P.M. Graves-Brown (ed), *Matter, Materiality and Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000).
- 62 We would like to thank the Kinmen National Park for generously sharing this information.
- 63 Interior Ministry Blog, '2014 Kinmen Tunnel Music Festival returns in October' <
http://www.moi.gov.tw/chi/chi_moi_note/moi_note_detail.aspx?sn=765> Last
 accessed 8 October 2014. Translated from Chinese.
- 64 M. Gallagher, 'Sounding ruins: reflections on the production of an "audio drift"', *Cultural Geographies*, 2014, forthcoming.
- 65 S. Feld, 'Places sensed, senses placed: Towards a sensuous epistemology of space, in D. Howes (ed), *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), p.179.
- 66 Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, pp. 17-18.
- 67 W.J. Ong, 'The shifting sensorium', in D. Howes (ed), *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 25-30.
- 68 See A. Kanngieser, 'A sonic geography of voice: Towards an affective politics'. *Progress in Human Geography*, 36(3), 2012, pp. 336-353.
- 69 J.J. Cohen, 'Geophilia, or the love of stone', *Continent*, 4(2), 2015, pp. 8-18; M. Pointon, 'These Fragments I have Shored against my Ruins', in K. Lippincott, U. Eco and E.H. Gombrich, *The Story of Time* (London: Merrell Holberton, 1999), p. 199.
- 70 Macdonald, 'Words in stone?' p. 120.
- 71 Op. cit.
- 72 D. Crouch, 'Tourist practices and performances', in A.A. Lew, C. M. Hall and A.M. Williams (eds), *A Companion to Tourism* (Malden, MA; Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 85-95, p. 91.
- 73 S. Feld, 'Sound as a symbolic system: The Kaluli Drum', in D. Howes (ed), *The Varieties of Sensory Experience: A Sourcebook in the Anthropology of the Senses* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 79-99.
- 74 Op. cit., p. 79.
- 75 J. Sofaer (ed) *Material Identities* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), p. 1.
- 76 Cohen, 'Geophilia, or the love of stone', p. 12.
- 77 K. Hetherington, 'The unsightly: touching the Parthenon Frieze', *Theory Culture & Society*, 19(5/6), 2002, pp. 187-205.
- 78 W.J. Ong, 'The shifting sensorium', pp. 25-30.
- 79 Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things*
- 80 Tilley, *The Materiality of Stone*, p. 222.
- 81 K. Barad, *Meeting the universe halfway: Quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), p. 151.

- 82 J.J. Zhang, 'Of Kaoliang, Bullets and Knives: Local entrepreneurs and the battlefield tourism enterprise in Kinmen (Quemoy), Taiwan', *Tourism Geographies*, 12(3), 2010, pp. 395-411.
- 83 V. Buchli and G. Lucas, 'Between remembering and forgetting', in V. Buchli and G. Lucas (eds), *Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London; New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 80.

Author biographies

J.J. Zhang is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography at The University of Hong Kong. He gained his PhD from Durham University, UK. His doctoral research was on the cultural-geo-politics of rapprochement tourism between China and Taiwan. His research interests lie in the intersection of material culture, tourism and geopolitics. He writes on issues pertaining to bordering practices and social memories as they unfold at the 'lived' and 'everyday' levels.

Mike Crang is a Professor of Geography at Durham University. His PhD was on social memory and the heritage industry in England. He has studied various practices of heritage and social memory, decay and ruination, looking at salvage photography, local history groups, military and civilian re-enactment groups, through to open-air museums. His work has led him to examine the cultures and practices of tourism. He edited the journal *Tourist Studies* for ten years and has published nine books including 'Doing Ethnographies' (with Ian Cook).



Figure 1 Location of Kinmen



Figure 2 The Kinmen Knife in various forms ranging from the traditional Chinese cleavers to multi-purpose and sashimi knives (Source: www.kinmenknife.com)



Figure 3 Making the Kinmen Knife amid a dump of artillery shell cases



Figure 4 Half-knife half-artillery shell display



Figure 5 The Zhaishan Tunnel



Figure 6 Zhaishan Tunnel Music Festival: Kinmen Harmony 2010 (Courtesy of Kinmen National Park)